

**First Comprehensive
Development and
Cooperation Agenda of the
Dominican Diaspora**

Introduction

Leaders of the Dominican diaspora in the United States were summoned by Congressman Adriano Espaillat to participate in a cycle of meetings and discussions, to identify the points of modulation between the vast resources of the diaspora and the needs of the Dominican population.

From these exchanges, an innovative vision, which together with fundamental guidelines would define the creation of Interdisciplinary Commissions of Dominican professionals, elected figures, public workers, businessmen and technical consultants, to establish a First Agenda / Proposal of the Dominican Diaspora from the United States and the Dominican Government.

The proposal of a Comprehensive Agenda with a certain “Bilateral” character could only be properly conceived and projected in a scenario like the current one. On the one hand, the moment is projected as one full of commitment, appreciation and positive reciprocity between the Dominican diaspora and their nation of origin. And, on the other hand, the communities that live abroad and that in turn identify themselves as a functional and active diaspora, are right between the third and fifth generations, where historically it has been shown that their influences, social resources, intellectual, economic, and political already reached levels of important projection and incidence, and that in turn, are complemented by a sincere emotional debt of wanting to be useful to the nation of origin.

In actuality, the population that define themselves as Dominican in the US, has surpassed the amount of two million people. The biggest concentrations are in the North East (NY, NJ, PA, MA, y RI, DC, MD, VA, NC, y SC) and in the South East (Florida, and Georgia). This in turn, already exceeds in inhabitants, 31 of the 32 provinces of the Dominican Republic. Although the number cannot equal the democratic influence or participation, if we can say that, the greater the quantity 2020 remittances reached their highest growth in the last 10 years, registering an amount of US \$8,219.3 million. This represents 16% above 2019. The tendency post covid shows increases higher than 30%

The pending capital is greater than what has been presented. The Dominicans outside the country have revenue of \$54,000 million in annual income, for the joint diasporas of the US and Spain. And keep US \$3,000 million in savings in the banking system of where they reside. The last graph does not consider the capacity of credit, retirement funds, personal investments or property and values that they can have. - Quote extracted from the Report “Diaspora Dominicana: Inclusión Productiva e Inversión en el Desarrollo Nacional”, O.I.M.

Our ability to influence and interact

The Dominican diaspora, especially that based in the United States, represents the largest reserve of the intellectual, economic, and socio-political heritage of the Dominican Republic.

The human capital that we possess has not yet been valued, and rarely referenced or taken into account.

We know how many we are, where we are and how much money we send

The 83.8% of the flows in the last 8 months came from the United States. The Central Bank of the Dominican Republic (BCRD) reported that in 2020, remittances reached their highest growth in the last ten years, registering an amount of US \$ 8,219.3 million. This represents 16.0% above 2019. The post-covid trend dictates an increase of more than 30%.

The outstanding capital is greater than that which has been presented so far. Dominicans abroad have an annual income of the surprising figure of US \$ 54,000 million in annual income, for the joint diasporas of the United States and Spain. And they save US \$ 3,000 Million in savings in the banking system where they reside. This last figure does not take into account creditworthiness, the value of your companies, your retirement funds, personal investments or property and values that you may have. -Quote extracted from the Report "Dominican Diaspora: Productive Inclusion and Investment in National Development", O.I.M.

Recommendations

PRODUCTIVITY

Investment

- Motivation of the Investment Fund and Diaspora Coverage.
- Creation of a Trust Fund for the Diaspora, the product of remittances without taxing them.
- Facilitation of Investment in Production Sectors.

Interconnection

- Collaboration of professionals and specialists.
- Manage voluntarism with Associations of Peoples Abroad and Municipalities.
- Facilitate conditions and increase efficiency in favor of the Shipping and Cargo Industry. (Be more practical in the processes of shipping food, clothing, etc. from the Diaspora).
- Create a commission that establishes a connection between a State (of the USA) and the Dominican Republic.

Investigation

- Promotion of Patent and Trademark Registration.
- Creation of subsidy for updating and technological advances.

Participation

- Facilitate the process to acquire dominican double citizenship
- Greater voter registration
- Allocation of a larger budget for the promotion and logistics of elections abroad

Congressional Representation

- Promote Senate representation through constituency
- Reorganization of deputy districts
- The right of one person to vote

Diplomatic Representation

- Professionalization of the diplomatic corps.
- Salary adjustment comparable with other countries in the region.

(Remove salary disparities in the diplomatic corps).

Consular Services

- Facilitate access to legal documents.
- Review of consular fees.
- Make the shipment of the remains of loved ones more efficient.
- Tax Reform in favor of reducing flight costs to the Dominican Republic.
- Repeal of Decree 430-17 charging tourist card US \$ 10.

Education

Higher education

- Create a Scholarship and Grant Fund.
- Promote mentors / tutors / speakers' system.
- Create bilingual preparation programs.
- Originate the exchange of Universities for internships and research.
- A high-caliber Civic-Cultural * Artistic * Center, which serves as the historical archive of the Diaspora.
- Facilitate the safe adoption process for Diaspora representatives.

Documentation and Procedure

- Facilitation of Homologation Processes.
- Work plan aimed at those seeking to finish their education in the United States.
- Efficiency / Modernization of the fast acquisition process of important documents (divorce, death, title, birth certificates, etc).

Culture

- Sponsor the creation of a Civic and Cultural Center that also keeps the profiles of a historical archive of the history of the Dominican Diaspora in the United States.
- Cultural exchange with sectors of the Arts, Folklore, Parades and Dominican Festivals.

Health

Insurance and Services

- Facilitate the use of Medicare Insurance by citizens and residents, particularly the elderly and veterans.
- Provide Health Services for Dominican-Americans (SENASA).
- Create Health Windows / Kioskos in Consulates.

Collaboration and Donation of Equipment

- Process Technical and Administrative collaboration between RD and US institutions.
- Coordinate donation of medical equipment and supplies.

Investment and Management

- Promote investment in the construction and administration of Public Hospitals.

THE PILLARS OF DEVELOPMENT

Having established the vision, and the strategic and referential exchange frameworks between the Dominican Diaspora of the United States and the Government of the Dominican Republic around a Comprehensive Cooperation and Development Agenda, it only remains to break down the parts of these exchange pillars. Feasible priorities related to both parties and within the framework of what is established by the country, as part of its sustainable development path.

Some are highly complex, which will require a greater and more dedicated commitment from the state and its entities, while others will be easy to implement, with little coordination and follow-up. All, however, are equally important to strengthening the relationship of the diaspora with their nation of origin and the vision of both parties, in being complementary to their well-being and development.

PRODUCTIVITY | GOVERNANCE | EDUCATION | HEALTH

Rather than answer those typical technical questions that lead to dozens of reports and endless opinions of what is possible, the important thing is to recognize that the wealth and potential of the diaspora can make significant contributions to the development of the nation, if these are properly and actively focused on specific, concise areas that show results immediately.

The areas that we have identified are the fundamental pillars of all development: productivity, education, health and governance. To ambition more than there is to dilute the potential of the human capital that the diaspora represents for the Dominican Republic.

In the next segment, we will detail those priority elements with specific proposals, which will not require more technical analysis than is necessary to get them started.

PRODUCTIVITY

The potential of the Dominican diáspora to contribute to production inclusion is found in the social capital, the capacity of savings and credit, that is directly related to a social network that covers half of the homes of the country. - “Diáspora Dominicana: Inclusión Productiva e Inversión en el Desarrollo Nacional”, OIM

In addition to the intellectual reserve that the Dominican diaspora in the US could represent, and its ability to be an incredible course of specialized knowledge transfer, its most important and current potential lies in its economic power.

We can mention that the remittances represent a significant figure to the Dominican Republic. And what has been a continuous increase of 8% yearly since the beginning of the century. Studies indicate that more than 10% of the domestic dominicans receive remittances.

Recommendations in Investment

Funds of Investments and Coverage of the Diáspora interests Dominicans abroad, who want to invest in their home country. Including, in their patrimony and in the development to glisten. Interdisciplinary leaders from the Dominican diaspora in the United States, are creating a fund of investments and coverage of the Diaspora.

- Trust fund from the Diaspora

Complementary of the initiative, we recommend that the Dominican Government create a Diaspora Trust Fund, where the capitalization is the product of guarantees created and established in the securitization in the assets of transactional remittance flows, without taxing the issuer, receiver or the company that carries out the transaction. The capitalization of this fund can serve as a source of resource, directed at the necessities of inclusion that the returning Dominicans and Dominicans abroad can specify.

The diás[pra has an intellectual and economic capital that can adjust well to plans of development of the Association of Franca Zones in the country. Like a collective and through economic groups of the Dominicans abroad, they can have an important participation in the plans of expansion and efficiency of the industries that exist in the zones francas in the country.

GOVERNANCE

For source country governments, building trust with diaspora populations can also mean creating a welcoming environment for their participation in development activities. Among them, improving the climate for political participation and business, through greater transparency in regulations and licensing requirements and a more consistent application of property regulations. - “Roadmap for the Participation of Diasporas in Development: International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Institute for Migration Policies.

Governance is fundamental in terms of making transparent and increasing the trust and identity of citizens, companies and institutions in the diaspora with their nation of origin, when through these they will be promoting collaboration, links, services, products or programs. In addition, it is an incredible instrument of citizen participation, commitment and transfer between managers and administrators of local governments and the knowledge and cooperation that they can contribute.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN PARTICIPATION

- Facilitate the process to acquire dual citizenship

The 1,162,568 who were born in the United States and define themselves as Dominicans, who in turn could opt for Dominican citizenship, have not been motivated to do so. Assuming a campaign for the naturalization of these people who feel like ours, could increase their commitment and participation in the country, socially, economically and culturally.

- Greater voter registration

The Dominican nation could be democratically enriched if its diaspora were one that enjoyed greater inclusion and participation in electoral processes. At present, only 530,000 Dominicans abroad are registered with the Central Electoral Board, of the more than 900,000 that could be. We need to eliminate the excuses of disinterest, little information and limited budget.

- Allocation of a larger budget for the promotion and logistics of elections in the outside.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATION

- Promote Senate representation by constituency.

The constitution supports the division of the Dominican Republic by provinces. And even though the United States is not and should not be viewed as a province, its electoral boundaries are considered constituencies. Therefore, each constituency must have a Senator. That possibility is within the constitutional parameters.

- Reorganization of county councils

The representation that is tied to the suffrage must be dictated by the number of inhabitants in the demarcation. The diaspora should enjoy the same benefit that every other Dominican on the island enjoys when represented. It is urgent to redistribute congressional districts that reflect population concentration.

- The right of one person to one vote.

Once again, and for a third legislative period, seven members of Congress with Overseas Deputies represent the Dominicans who live in the diaspora in the Chamber. None of them were selected by way of Party Primaries, nor by direct vote. That is why they will never feel committed to who they represent. We need the vote to stop dragging. The right to directly choose your legislator is a constitutional right.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION

Professionalization of the diplomatic corps

Despite the existence of the Institute of Higher Education in Diplomatic and Consular Training, which is still a part of the diplomatic corps of Consulates, Embassies and other institutions abroad, it is not fully qualified for the functions required to represent the Dominican State and Dominicans abroad. These should be career positions, not political and temporary.

- Salary adjustment comparable with other countries in the region

The Dominican government pays around US \$ 32 million a year to its diplomatic corps, averaging salaries between US \$ 1,600 to US \$ 6,000 per month. In contrast to the Guatemalan government, which covers salaries of US \$ 1,200 to US \$ 4,000. You have to check that. There is a disparity between the salaries of members of the diplomatic corps. There should be a review of administrative expenses. Diplomatic salaries must be adjusted or homogenized, especially comparable with the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN CONSULAR SERVICES

Facilitate access to legal documents

Despite the initiatives of the General Directorate of Government Ethics and Integrity via the Single Portal of the SAIP (Request for Access to Public Information) and the progress made by the Dominican Consulates in the United States, some processes are still requiring more time. than necessary or required. Especially if they require some certification from a Ministry in the Dominican Republic.

- Review of consular fees

On the internet platforms, the costs of consular fees in the Dominican Republic cannot be consulted. But their figures exceed the average of the other government institutions in Latin America.

Make sending the remains of loved ones more efficient

Despite programs such as CieloRD, moving the remains of a loved one back to the Dominican Republic, still requires certain and unnecessary bureaucracies and procedures that could be unified.

- Repeal of Decree 430-17 charging tourist card

The decree that created the tourist card for Dominicans abroad of US\$10, when you value the amount of currency that enters through it, more than a substantial source of tax collection, it is more a nuisance and inconsideration with the Dominicans abroad.

- Tax Reform in favor of reducing flight costs to the Dominican Republic

The country charges a series of taxes on air transport, including US \$ 20 for the departure tax, US \$ 15 for the airport tax, 18% ITBIS for the ticket, US \$ 10 or the same amount in euros for the tourist card, RD \$ 5.81 for the AVTUR and US \$ 15 for entry to the terminals owned by Aeropuertos Dominicanos Siglo 21.

EDUCATION

At the beginning of the Strategic Guidelines of the Multi-year Public Sector Plan of the Chapter entitled "Towards a Quality Education with Equity", the interest of forging a policy that aims to improve the quality of education is set, through carrying out actions in different directions, aimed at: modifying the regulations that govern the education of the entire National Education System, which includes public education and regulates private education; the revision of the curriculum, the improvement of the teacher's knowledge and living conditions, among other measures.

The approach established in the Strategic Guidelines of the Public Sector Multi-year Plan is consistent with what is established in the National Development Strategy itself, which points out the importance of consolidating a quality higher education system that responds to the development needs of the Nation and the diaspora, through:

RECOMMENDATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Create a Scholarship and Grant Fund

Let us value the national importance of training highly qualified human capital abroad. Let us have the benefits of complementary loans via the Diaspora Trust Fund that together with the portfolio of scholarships abroad offered by the different cooperation agencies in the country, or the same admissions that these young professionals manage to get in leading educational institutions in the foreigner, for this to be possible.

- Promote mentors / tutors / speakers system

These programmatic initiatives can be achieved in a more efficient way, if it is complemented by taking advantage of Dominican experts, professionals, entrepreneurs and teachers in the diaspora willing to collaborate with the Dominican educational system, where they can serve as mentors. / tutors / lecturers in numerous training channels that can be developed. More than any other professional of the diaspora, those forged or with experience in education have greater desire than anyone else, to be an instrument of change for their country.

- Create bilingual preparation programs.

- Development of a curriculum on the history and contributions of the diaspora.

Assistance programs aimed at Children and Youth that focus on their bilingual preparation to ensure that they speak both English and Spanish.

- Originate the exchange of Universities for research internships

For students majoring in social sciences, entry-level jobs in these fields often require a master's degree or special certification. However, the number of Dominican students pursuing graduate studies is shrinking more and more, making the job search more difficult for the inexperienced. Based on this, we recommend:

Promote the exchange of Universities for scientific and academic research internships. Focused on the growth of Dominican-American youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN DOCUMENTATION AND PROCEDURE

- Facilitation of Homologation Processes

The process of homologation of those high school graduates who come from the United States to study in our Higher Education centers cannot continue to be one that requires endless absurd and bureaucratic procedures, which can sometimes take from 6 months to a year. This process of endless days of ineffective lines to process documents that force the university applicant to jump from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the Attorney General's Office and then to the Ministry of Education and even the Central Electoral Board, for a more efficient one must be eliminated. Although there is no roadmap for the process, the university applicant is regularly guided by intuition, rather than the procedure itself. And all, to achieve a certification, which only requires the university itself where it could be registering.

- Work out a plan aimed at those seeking to finish their higher education.

The Dominican Republic has more access to per capita college grants and scholarships than might exist in the United States for young Dominicans in the diaspora.

If we were able to articulate a Loans program from the Diaspora Trust Fund, complemented by a local University Scholarship, in favor of these young Dominicans residing in the United States, so that they can pursue careers in the Dominican Republic, it would be something from which many families and the country could benefit.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN CULTURE

- Sponsor the construction of a Civic and Cultural Center

The most important link between the Dominican diaspora and their nation of origin lies in cultural exchanges. For this reason, the importance of generating civic spaces, where the autochthonous and the cultural, outweigh the political and social interests.

- Cultural exchange with sectors of the Dominican Arts, Folklore, Parades and Festivals

We believe that the Ministry of Culture and its programs should exercise a continuous program of support and promotion of culture in the artistic and folkloric orders, parades and festivals of the Dominican communities abroad.

HEALTH

Public spending on health in the Dominican Republic is below the Latin American average, as well as the average for upper-middle-income countries (the category in which the Dominican Republic is located). However, ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages is essential for the sustainable development of a nation.

A cooperative diaspora can help governments and communities resolve a health crisis, address its humanitarian consequences, and contribute to subsequent recovery and rehabilitation.

The transfer of the competences of the diaspora can strengthen and create health resources for a country affected by a crisis situation. Members of the diaspora can mobilize other support for the rehabilitation of the country of origin, which the country did not have at the time of the crisis.

Before the pandemic, great strides were made to improve the health of millions of people. Specifically, these great strides were made by increasing life expectancy and reducing some of the common causes of death associated with infant and maternal mortality. However, more efforts are needed to completely eradicate a wide variety of diseases and address a large number of health problems, both ongoing and emerging.

INSURANCE AND SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create Health Windows / Kiosks in Consulates

and provide Health Services for Dominican-Americans (SENASA)

An important gesture, the Mexicans have developed. In the respective Consulates in the United States, there are health windows, which provide basic health information to Mexican migrants and make referrals to health centers and government programs in the United States.

- Facilitate the use of Medicare Insurance by citizens and residents, particularly the elderly and veterans.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN COLLABORATION AND DONATION OF EQUIPMENT

- Process Technical and Administrative collaboration between RD and US institutions.

Regarding professional collaboration, we see that members of the diaspora can serve as transmission entities for administrative resources as well as sources of investment. The greatest Dominican health problems do not lie in medical capacity, but in the availability of centers, equipment and the managerial competence of the centers and services themselves.

We envision coordination through state leaders.

- Coordinate donation of medical equipment and supplies

The contributions with the fastest impact that a diaspora specialized in health could provide to the Dominican Republic lies in its greatest asset: the managerial experience of physicians residing in the United States and their accessibility to equipment that they could well obtain as a donation for the Centers that require it.

INVESTMENT AND MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Promote investment in the construction and administration of Public Hospitals.

In compliance with the optional described in the health guidelines of the government's multi-year agenda, which has the objective of guaranteeing the right to health of the Dominican population, with the financial resources required for the execution of preventive public health programs and application of an efficient hospital management model, with competent and committed human resources, is perfectly complemented with the aforementioned managerial and philanthropic component. But, in addition, this could be perfected by an even more shocking possibility. The possibility of investing in the construction and development of Public Hospitals, which could then also be administered by private entities of the diaspora itself.

This proposal is in accordance with the government's public policies, to guarantee the efficiency of the health system, establish the modality of referral and counter-referral from the UNAP's to second and third level hospitals and establish protocols to move towards a fully decentralized National Health System, with its own patrimony and legal personality; and managed by a trained board of directors.

CONSULTING DELEGATION

The twelve months between February 2020 and January 2021, brought with them two neuralgic scenarios that coincidentally impacted the Dominican communities on the island and the diaspora in the United States, alike. The devastating COVID-19 pandemic and the traumatic electoral processes affected the mental, physical, emotional, comprehensive and democratic health of our communities.

Once the electoral processes that affected the Dominican residents of the United States and those of the Dominican Republic were overcome, and with the resolution of the virus on track, leaders of the Dominican diaspora from the United States were summoned by Congressman Adriano Espaillat, to participate in a cycle of meetings and conversations, to identify the points of modulation between the vast resources of the diaspora and the needs of the Dominican population.

From these exchanges, an innovative vision, which together with fundamental guidelines would be able to define the creation of Interdisciplinary Commissions of Dominican professionals, elected figures, public servants, businessmen and technical consultants, to establish a First Agenda / Proposal of the Dominican Diaspora of the United States and the Dominican Government.